

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 2256

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CZ
SUBJECT: 10TH ANNIVERSARY; SOME REFLECTIONS

1. ALTHOUGH 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF WP INTERVENTION WAS A NON-EVENT IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, IF NOT IN WEST, THE TREATMENT OF THE ANNIVERSARY OFFERS OPPORTUNITY FOR SPECULATION ABOUT THE REGIME'S CURRENT INTERNAL POLITICS.

2. ON THE SURFACE ANNIVERSARY WAS, NOT SURPRISINGLY, A HARD-LINER AFFAIR. HUSAK MADE HIS STATEMENT EARLY ON AND THENCEFORTH REMAINED ABOVE THE ISSUE. AS THE DATE APPROACHED, VASIL BILAK WAS VERY MUCH THE BALL-CARRIER FOR THE LEADERSHIP, HIS HIGH POINT MARKED BY MAJOR ARTICLE FOR SOVIET NOVOYE VREMYA REWRITING HISTORY OF 1968, WHICH WAS WIDELY REPRINTED OR EXCERPTED IN AUGUST 12 CZECHOSLOVAK PRESS. FELLOW HARD-LINERS JAN FOJTIK AND ALOIS INDRA ALSO SCORED WITH ANNIVERSARY ARTICLES IN SOVIET
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PAPERS - PRAVDA OF AUGUST 17 AND IZVESTIYA OF AUGUST 21, RESPECTIVELY - THAT WERE LESS WIDELY REPLAYED HERE. MILOS JAKES, A LOWER-RANKING HARD-LINER, ALSO GOT HIS PLAY IN PARTY THEORETICAL BIMONTHLY NOVA MYSL FOR JULY-AUGUST. THROUGHOUT THE APPROACH TO THE ANNIVERSARY HARD-LINE DOMINATED PARTY DAILIES RUDE PRAVO AND PRAVDA AND WEEKLIES SUCH AS TVORBA AND THE TRIBUNA DEPT UP A STEADY FLOW OF PRAISE FOR INTERVENTION AND

OF SCURRILOUS ATTACKS ON 1968 REFORMERS.

3. OTHER MEMBERS OF LEADERSHIP HAVE APPARENTLY NOT PUBLICLY ADDRESSED ANNIVERSARY ISSUE RECENTLY. SMALLER DAILIES TENDED TO BE SELECTIVE IN USE OF ANNIVERSARY PROPAGANDA.

4. ONE OF MOST INTERESTING FACETS OF PRE-ANNIVERSARY PROPAGANDA WAS WHAT SEEMS TO US TO BE CLEAR ATTEMPT BY RUDE PRAVO AND PARTY ELEMENTS WHICH CONTROL IT TO USE OCCASION TO POLITIC AGAINST ANY SORT OF ECONOMIC REFORM. ITS EDITORIALS HAVE USED EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO PRAISE ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS DURING HUSAK REGIME AND ATTRIBUTE THEM TO RIGID ADHERENCE TO CENTRAL PLAN.

5. IT IS TEMPTING TO ASSUME THAT THESE INDICATORS PROVE THAT HARDEST-LINERS ARE CURRENTLY IN FIRM CONTROL OF SYSTEM, AND THAT CASE IS CERTAINLY ARGUABLE. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT CAN ALSO BE ARGUED THAT ANNIVERSARY HAD TO BE FACED IN SOME WAY AND MORE MODERATE ELEMENTS IN LEADERSHIP DECIDED TO LEAVE LIME-LIGHT TO HARDLINERS, POSSIBLY IN HOPES THAT LATTER WOULD FURTHER ERODE THEIR CREDENTIALS WITH PUBLIC AND RANK-AND-FILE PARTY MEMBERS THROUGH THEIR EXCESSIVE ENTHUSIASM FOR THE INTERVENTION. SOVIET PRESSURES TO PAINT INTERVENTION AND ANNIVERSARY IN BRIGHTEST COLORS MUST HAVE BEEN GREAT AND ONE-TIME OPPONENTS OF INTERVENTION MIGHT WELL HAVE PREFERRED TO LEAVE DEFENDING IT TO THOSE WITH TASTE FOR IT.

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6. WE BELIEVE THAT BALANCE OF FORCES WITHIN LEADERSHIP REMAINS ESSENTIALLY UNCHANGED. IF THAT IS CORRENT, CAUTIOUS EXPERIEMENTS WITH ECONOMY SHOULD CONTINUE, ALBEIT POSSIBLY EVEN MORE CAUTIOUSLY. WE ASSUME THERE WILL BE A CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM IN NEXT FEW WEEKS, WHICH MAY PROVIDE SOME TENUOUS CLUES TO ANY EFFECTS ON BALANCE WITHIN LEADERSHIP OR GENERAL POLICY LINE OCCASIONED BY INTRA-REGIME MANEUVERING DURING ANNIVERSARY PERIOD.
BYRNE

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